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Montana State Fund

Guardian

JUNE 1999

SUPPORT THE RETURN TO WORK PROCESS

By Doreen Kambich

Maintaining contact with injured employees is essential to successful disability management, returning employees to work, and managing costs. Those of us who communicate with employers should emphasize the importance of this contact.

Sustaining a work-related injury or occupational disease is generally a traumatic and unfamiliar experience for employees. Employers who contact the employee as soon as an injury occurs, as well as on a routine basis after that, help alleviate concerns. Benefits of maintaining routine contact with the injured employee include:

1. Shows *the employer cares* and that the employee is valuable to them and the business – builds a good rapport and increases employee morale and loyalty.
2. Provides an opportunity for the employer to explain they *want to provide temporary modified duty* within the restrictions outlined by the treating physician in order to help the healing process – keeps them physically and socially active.
3. Helps the employee understand they are expected to return to work as soon as it is medically possible. The *employee is expected to participate in the healing process* by making every effort to return to their normal life, which includes returning to work when it is medically appropriate.
4. *Keeps the employee informed.* An employee who feels connected to employment while off work has a sense of value to their employer and is not likely to hire an attorney. An employee who feels abandoned because of a lack of contact from the employer will not likely feel remorse in hiring an attorney to get as much as they can from their employer.

Continued on page 4.

WHAT AN IDEA!

Montana State Fund has launched a new program to recognize innovative ideas. The IDEA (Innovation Deserves Extra Acknowledgement) Program rewards documented achievements by an individual or group, as well as suggestions for future operational improvements. The achievement can be a cost-saving idea or one which improves customer service without increasing the cost of operations. The reward is a monetary one, so don't keep any of those great ideas to yourself!

We've already had our first winner. While preparing to manually roll out our new computer system to over 200 PCs, Lisa Carson thought to herself, "there's got to be a better way." And she found one. Lisa researched a new technology and found a product that would run a script to automate the software installation. Her initiative saved State Fund $10,000 and earned her $750!

Contact Morgan Hahn for more information on the IDEA program.

THANKS TO MIS!

Everyone at State Fund thanks the MIS Department for their hard work and around-the-clock dedication in getting our new PowerComp™ system launched. Great job!

Published monthly by and for the employees of the Montana State Fund.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

At a Department Rep Meeting earlier this year, I was asked to include a form in the *Guardian* so employees could ask questions of me and I could respond in future issues of the newsletter. As you can see, this issue contains just such a form.

You are invited to clip out the form below, write out your question, and forward it to Chuck Christiansen in Human Resources and Communications who will forward it on to me. Future issues of the *Guardian* will contain both the questions and my answers, as well as a new copy of the form for additional questions. Please write your name on the question.

We will include this form and the Q & A forum in the *Guardian* on a trial basis. If it is used regularly, it will become a standard feature every month. I encourage you to use this form whenever you wish. Increased communications will only serve to help all of us at State Fund provide better service to our internal and external customers.

I'd like to know. . .

_____

_____

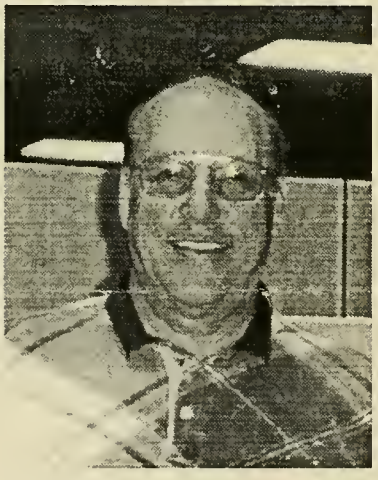
_____

_____ ?

Name: _____

(Cut out and submit your question to Chuck Christiansen by the 15th of each month for inclusion in the next Guardian.)

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH



Congratulations to Wayne Dillavou, Claim Trainer and the May Employee of the Month. Wayne coordinates Claim Department training, updates the Claim Procedures Manual, and ensures Department issues and concerns are addressed. Wayne understands how the Department operates and strives to make sure the BIS system operates smoothly. He has been a valuable member of the internal review team and spent many hours participating in the Tillinghast study of the Claim Department.

Wayne's co-workers say he is a key member of the Department. "Wayne helps new employees feel comfortable with State Fund's system and the workers' compensation laws before they are assigned a caseload." His contribution and enthusiasm for the State Charitable Giving Campaign helped make it successful this past year.

Along with a great work ethic, Wayne has a great attitude as well. One co-worker describes Wayne as "always upbeat and enthusiastic. He is a valuable team member and fun to work with."

Thanks, Wayne for all your contributions to the State Fund team!

KUDOS KOLUMN

Jeannie Glenn sends kudos to Kevin Bartsch, Mary Martinez, Carol Morris, Sam Heigh, Cris McCoy, and Dennis Small for their help and speedy service that enabled her to update BIS with FY99 legal payments and warrant cancellations.

The Admin & Finance Department thanks Dan Gengler for all his hard work during the fiscal year 2000 ratemaking season. He completed all projects despite an increased work load and decreased timelines.

Carol Morris thanks the Legal Department for their generous sharing of the Law Library, especially Kathy Gowan for her flexible scheduling attitude!

A claimant recently complimented Mary Lynn Ramsey and Shauna Foley on their ourstanding customer service.

A customer recently spoke with Andy Anderson regarding independent contractors and insurance requirements. The customer said he deals with a lot of different agencies and we are "by far the nicest and friendliest." Great customer service Andy!

Thanks from the Admin & Finance Department to Joanne Shydian who recently provided training sessions on the PPRP process. One employee reports, "Your workshop was very informative and I'm sure I'll use a lot of it in preparation of my PPRP."

CSU thanks all employees for the amazing teamwork during the launch of PowerComp™.

Kudos continued on page 3.

Employee Action Committee Update • June 1999

Welcome to the first edition of the Employee Action Committee Update! This first issue highlights the State Fund wide recommendations that originated from the 1998 Employee Opinion Survey and the status of those recommendations. This update will be published monthly and subsequent issues will report on the status of individual department recommendations.

Internal Customer Service

Action: Implement a computer system – PAALS/AMPS

Benefits:
Increase efficiency, provide means to share data internally, improves internal customer service, provides immediate access to data thereby reducing internal requests and workload, reduced paperwork.

STATUS: Complete! PowerComp™ was officially launched Wednesday, June 23. We may experience bugs with the new system for a while, but these problems will be prioritized as discovered and resolved.

. . . . . .

Action: Customer Service Training – focus on internal customer

Benefits:
Increased internal efficiency, which directly affects the quality of customer service for the customer, decreased response time to internal requests, improved morale. A customer service training class could be offered throughout the year. New employees should attend the first class available. Current employees should attend every other year beginning FY2000. These classes should not exceed 2 hours.

STATUS: Complete! Customer Service Training classes have been added to the FY2000 training calendar. The calendar will be released in July.

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Action: Develop a "Getting to Know State Fund"

Benefits:
Increase awareness of the insurance industry and department functions, develop understanding between interdepartmental objectives as well as intradepartmental objectives, improve cooperation and coordination between departments. Human Resources could create a "Getting to Know" class which focuses on the interdependency of all departments. This class should be mandatory for all employees in FY2000. State Fund should continue the current "Getting to Know" series and implement the intermediate "Getting to Know" series which was to be begin FY99.

STATUS: Complete! Human Resources and Communications Department has included a "Getting to Know ***State Fund***" course in the FY2000 State Fund Training Calendar. We will continue offering the "Getting to Know ***Department***" series and expand this to include an "intermediate" level in FY2000.

Action: Revise PPRP Customer Service competency level A to include – "Employees acknowledge internal requests for information within three hours of receipt."

Benefits:
Improve Internal Customer Service, increased efficiency internally, increase interdepartmental teamwork, improve external customer service. Letting the requester know one has received the request and when it will be answered is considered an acknowledgement. This acknowledgement can be made verbally or in writing.

STATUS: Complete! The recommended language has been included in the Customer Service Competency Proficiency level "A" definition. The revision will coincide with the new performance year beginning July 1, 1999.

Trust

Action: Be aware of confidential information and treat it as such.

Benefits: Preserving confidentiality will foster trust between employees and supervisors, improve morale, provide a means of establishing trust, dispel rumors, ensure items such as performance appraisals, disciplinary actions, personal complaints and salary information are only available to the intended parties.

STATUS: Complete and ongoing! Confidential documents are distributed in sealed envelopes and clearly marked "confidential". It was discussed and emphasized at the last manager's meeting and with executive staff. In future manager's and staff meetings, follow-up on this issue will continue. There will also be reminders to all staff in upcoming issues of the *"Guardian."*

. . . . . .

Action: Print confidential information on an alternative printer, or retrieve the printed confidential information immediately.

Benefits: Improve trust between employees and supervisors, improve morale, provide a means of establishing trust, dispel rumors.

STATUS: Complete and ongoing! Department heads have been asked to review the need for designated printers for the FY00 budget. The need to immediately retrieve confidential documents was discussed and emphasized at the last manager's meeting and with executive staff.

Value

Action: Staff's ideas, concerns, and complaints must be fairly addressed.

Benefits: Staff **and** Management are respectful and professional at all times, employees are more comfortable making suggestions or comments about business operations, improved morale, improved communication, encourages suggestions from **all** employees.

STATUS: Complete and ongoing! The EAC recommendation report communicated this to all employees. In addition, it was emphasized at the last manager's meeting and with executive staff. Employees who believe they have not been treated fairly or with respect by their supervisor should report this to their department head to be addressed. If the problem is not effectively addressed at the department head level, then it should be brought to the President's attention.

CUSTOMER FOCUSED COMPETENCIES

By Morgan Hahn

You and your supervisor should be well on your way in preparation of your FY00 performance commitments. These commitments are driven by Montana State Fund's FY00 Strategic Business Plan. Your supervisor should ask you for input on appropriate performance commitments and measurements for the coming year. Once the draft is complete, your supervisor will forward it on to the next level supervisor for review and approval.

As a result of the Employee Opinion Survey that was conducted last year, the State Fund-wide Employee Action Committee (EAC) recommended improvement on various topic areas.

One such change is an addition to the MSF Competency #1, Customer Service. The EAC recommended this competency be revised to include "Employees acknowledge internal requests for information within three hours of receipt." They believe adding this requirement will benefit all by increased internal efficiency, increased interdepartmental teamwork, as well as improved external customer service. "Letting the requester know one has received the request and when it will be answered is considered an acknowledgement. This acknowledgement can be made verbally or in writing."

President/CEO Carl Swanson approved this recommendation, and Level A-Customer Service reads:

- *Recognizes internal and external customer needs.*
- *Follows directions to meet those needs within established guidelines.*
- *Employees acknowledge internal requests for information within three hours of receipt.*

This revision will be made to coincide with the new performance year beginning July 1, 1999. A copy of the revised MSF Competencies is available on the Intranet. Go to Department Info – HR&Communications – PPRP – Competencies.

We all recognize the importance of external customer service. This change is intended to help us better focus on *internal* customer service. As the State Fund-wide EAC points out, ultimately the external customer benefits when we communicate more effectively with one another internally.

NEW MOTTO PROMOTES TEAMWORK

By Kathy Rowsey

Claim Department leaders, Jim McCluskey and Jack Stewart, promote the concept of total teamwork, and they believe a motto will help accomplish that goal. A motto provides a visible statement of commitment. Every well-functioning team has a "rallying point" and the motto reminds everyone of our true objective.

Claim staff submitted motto ideas either individually or as a group. The choices were narrowed to five and department staff voted on the motto they would most like to represent the Claim Department. While all finalists were strong, the motto submitted by Tammy Walczak summed up everything the Claim Department does. The motto is, Working Together – Winning Together.

Jim McCluskey and Jack Stewart explain, "If we are to be successful at all the things we want to accomplish to be Montana's carrier of choice and provide the best claims service in the state, these two ideas are critical. If we work together, we can accomplish our goals; by accomplishing our goals, we all win. Our motto, Working Together—Winning Together defines our desired culture and the way we do business. It supports the philosophy that if we develop and nurture effective partnerships, we can all become winners."

Continued on page 4.

TRAINING CALENDAR

Thanks to the HR & Communications Department for another great year of training! The Fiscal Year 2000 Training Calendar is still "under construction" and will be distributed in July. When you receive your calendar, remember to plan your training for the entire year, get your supervisor's approval, and sign up through HR. You can access the Training Request Form through the intranet.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Personnel changes as of June 30. 1999

New Hires

Debra Murgel (Admin & Finance)
April Pulfrey (Claim)

Departures

Enid Christensen (Admin & Finance)
Lesley Barrett (Claim)
Mary Heare (Claim)

Promotions

Bridget Scevers (from Underwriting Services Assistant to MOCA)

MORE KUDOS

Kudos to Karen Miser from Mark Barry for her work on a data conversion problem. She went out of her way to manually enter changes to data so our conversion would go smoothly.

Great job to the Accounting Department! Mark Barry and Lynn Donnelly thank the employees who keyed 9,000 cash receipts last Sunday that were backlogged from the system being down for launch! With thousands more coming in this week, it is vital to process the payments onto the system in a timely manner.

NEW EMPLOYEES

Brian Bent recently joined the Underwriting Department as Underwriting Manager. Brian previously worked at EBI Companies and USF&G Insurance Company. He has a BA in History, an MS in Industrial Safety, and an ARM. Brian is from Lewistown and enjoys his family, waterskiing, snowmobiling, golfing, and hiking in his spare time.

Patricia Boege joins the Claim Department as a Medical Case Manager. Prior to State Fund, Patricia was the Quality Assurance/Utilization Review RN for the Montana Medicaid Managed Health Care Program with the Unisys Corporation. She has a BSN from the Medical College of Virginia and is a Certified Case Manager.

JOIN THE FUN!

Mark your calendar and make plans to attend the State Fund Summer Picnic. Festivities are scheduled for July 23 at Spring Meadow Lake from 4:30 to dusk. Food and pop are provided, as well as lots of fun and games for kids of all ages. Break out the sunscreen and lawn chairs and head to Spring Meadow Lake for a great evening! Contact Kelly Stanley for more information.

Continued from page 1.

5. The employer may be able to *identify potential red flags* – such as an employee never at home when they call. This may be a sign the employee is more active than the treating physician has noted. These suspicions should be discussed with the claim adjuster.

Regular contact on at least a weekly basis while the employee is off work is essential to maintaining good rapport with employees. It creates a *"win-win"* situation for both parties. The employee has a sense of value, wants to return to work, and heals more quickly. The employer retains valuable, trained employees, knows what is happening with an injured employee, and helps minimize workers' compensation costs by maintaining better control over claims.

Continued from page 3.

Developing a "working together" culture starts internally and includes not only the Claim Department, but all other departments as well. It also requires that we work well with our external partners—agents, Quality Care Montana network, and PPOs. Claim Department employees encourage other departments to consider a motto that reflects how their efforts work toward accomplishing State Fund's mission.

The motto can be used in a variety of ways. Some ideas include department awards, certificates, cups or mugs, pins, pens, and banners. Use of the motto is only confined by the employees' imaginations. Jim and Jack are convinced the good ideas for future use won't run out.

Tammy's motto won her dinner for two at the River Grille. She stated, "I have always been impressed by the teamwork in the Claim Department and wanted to present something that would remind employees and customers what we are all about." She also realized the motto should be short and catchy and remind us of what we want to achieve. Tammy was surprised and pleased with the certificate. She adds, "Being a mother of two, I don't often have the luxury of dinner with my husband at such a nice restaurant.

Jim and Jack thank everyone who participated by providing suggestions and taking the time to vote. Remember, it takes everyone "Working together" to "Win together."

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Jay Phillips

Please call 444-6502 with comments or suggested articles.

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